

REMARKS

Claims 116-118, 120-128, 130, 139-145, 147, 148, 150-160, 162-166 and 184-195 are now pending in the above-referenced patent application. Applicants respectfully request further consideration of these claims, in view of the supplemental amendments set forth above and the following remarks.

Examiner Interview

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy of an interview on October 27, 2003, during which the specification, the pending claims, and the prior art were discussed. Additional prior art combinations were discussed during the interview, including in particular (i) the potential combination under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) of Ashmead *et al.* (US 5534328) and Zanzucchi *et al.* (WO 96/15576), and (ii) the potential combination under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) of either Ashmead *et al.* and/or Zanzucchi *et al.*, considered with Dugan (US 5843385).

The Examiner indicated that the further amendments presented in this Supplemental Amendment C would be favorably considered and should put at least claims 116, 123, 130 and 145 in condition for allowance, subject to supplemental searching and further consideration by the Office. Applicants submit that each of the other pending claims are likewise in condition for allowance.

Canceled Claims

Claims 129, 131-138, 146 and 149 have been canceled, without prejudice, to advance the prosecution of the instant case. Applicants expressly reserve the right to refile the cancelled claims, without prejudice, in a continuing application. Applicants' cancellation of these claims should not, in any way, be considered as an admission with respect to any outstanding rejections applying to such claims, and Applicants hereby expressly deny any such interpretation. Likewise, Applicants cancellation of these claims should not, in any way, be considered as a surrender of any subject matter covered by the cancelled claims or any equivalents thereof, and Applicants hereby express their intent to pursue patent coverage for such subject matter and equivalents thereof.

Amended Claims

Claims 116, 123 and 130 have been amended to claim preferred embodiments of Applicants' invention having substantial commercial significance, and for which an early Notice of Allowance is desired. As amended, each of these claims now require a method involving a chemical reaction of interest in a parallel flow microreactor formed in a plurality of laminae, in which candidate catalyst materials are loaded and unloaded as part of the material-containing substrate (claims 116 and 123) or without affecting the structural integrity of the fluid distribution system (claim 130). Support for these amendment can be found in the specification, and in the as-filed claims, including as-filed claim 129, now canceled.

Claims 141-144 have been amended with regard to claim dependency, without change in the substantive scope thereof, to be consistent with cancellation of claim 131.

Claim 145 has been amended to include the requirements of claims 146 and 149, each now canceled, to require unloading and reloading of candidate catalyst materials using the automated material-handling system.

Claims 147 and 148 have been amended as to claim dependency to depend from claim 145 rather than claim 146, now cancelled.

No new matter has been added.

Equivalents

The amendments to the claim and the arguments presented in supplemental response to the Office action have been made to claim subject matter which the Applicants regard as their invention. By such amendments, the Applicants in no way intend to surrender any range of equivalents beyond that which is needed to patentably distinguish the claimed invention as a whole over the prior art. Applicants expressly reserve patent coverage to all such equivalents that may fall in the range between applicants literal claim recitations and those combinations that would have been obvious in view of the prior art.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

Applicants believe that no further fees are required in connection with this Supplemental Amendment C. If necessary, however, the Examiner is authorized to debit any such fees or any other fees required in connection with this application, or to credit any overpayment of fees in connection with this application to Deposit Account No. 50-0496.

Respectfully submitted,



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